

Government responded:

We provide local authorities with around £60 million a year to protect maintained nursery schools' funding. This ends in September 2020, and the Spending Review will determine what happens after that.

Maintained nursery schools support some of our most disadvantaged children. On average, compared with other types of early years providers, they serve a more disadvantaged population and have higher proportions of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Many of them also have specialist knowledge and skills in supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities and contribute to the leadership of the early years system. And they are high quality providers, with almost two-thirds judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

They also experience costs over and above those of other providers. This was acknowledged during the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula, and it is why the government is providing local authorities with around £60m a year of supplementary funding. This enables local authorities to protect the funding of maintained nursery schools.

In response to concerns about the allocation of places in maintained nursery schools for September 2019, the government has extended the end of the period over which this supplementary funding will be provided, from March 2020 to September 2020. This extension, which is worth around £24 million, enables local authorities to fully-fund their maintained nursery schools for the whole of the 2019/20 academic year. It ensures that local authorities can allocate places for this September with confidence.

This step has been welcomed by the maintained nursery schools sector, but the government is aware that while it deals with short-term concerns about places for September, it does not address the longer-term question about the future of maintained nursery schools. What happens after September 2020 - when the supplementary funding is now due to end - will be determined by the next Spending Review. This is the process by which the government sets departmental budgets for the next period. It is intended that the next one will conclude in time for the budget this autumn. Discussions will be informed by new research on the services, costs and quality of maintained nursery schools, which the government published at the end of February 2019.

The government will continue to work closely with the maintained nursery schools' sector in the next period.

Department for Education.